

How to read journal articles?

Most scientists read a scientific paper by:

- 1) Breezing through the abstract
- 2) Reading the last paragraph of the introduction
- 3) Looking and reading the figures
- 4) Then conclude by reading the discussion

Sometimes they may take two additional steps:

- 5) They may read the results, if it is hard to understand the authors line of reasoning behind the experiments
- 6) Sometimes the materials and methods are read, if one of the techniques described in the figure legend seems confusing, or you may want to try the technique yourself in your own lab

Why do scientist read this way?

- The abstract lets them know what the paper is about
- The last paragraph of the introduction lets them know exactly what the researchers did
- Since the figures are self standing, the results are additional and are sometimes even skipped
- The discussion allows them to see how the researcher perceived the data (then the reader either agrees or disagrees with their interpretation)